

seemed to view me as
something other than son
like maybe I wasn't the
howdy doody look alike he
taught to fight & play ball
maybe I was some kind of
sissy or fruit
& when the relatives came
to observe this curiosity
& my polish aunt asked me
to read some poems
the final perimeter was
pissed upon & we stood there
facing off & growling inside
steamfitter & poet
father & son
both of us caught up in it
a couple of privates in a
war waged through centuries
a war we neither understood
nor wanted.

MOTHER

it's not that I never liked her
that isn't exactly true
she just wasn't very
important to me
or at least not as important
as she thought she should be
& there was always that
disapproving gaze
that well I don't know
you suit yourself I'm
only your mother
& always searching for defects
in her creation
like when I was really little
the times when I'd feel her
studying my face
& then hold still a minute
& then she'd lick her finger
the way she did when
turning pages in a book
& then I told you
to hold still
& then the wet finger
on my face
rubbing away at a
speck of dirt
that smelly wet forefinger
sculpting my face.